Liberty of Conſcience

Pleaded by ſeveral weighty

REASONS

ON THE

Behalf of the People of GOD

CALLED

QUAKERS;

AND ALSO,

On the behalf of others whoſe conſciences are tender towards God.

With a tender

Meſſage of Love

UNTO THE

KING.

Written by *William Smith.*

London, Printed in the year, 1663.

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THe holy God, whose wisdom is infinite and unsearchable, did make of one blood all nations, and by his power and wisdom he breathed into man the breath of Life, and endued him with pure Reason, and Understanding, in which he bore the Image of God in Righteousness and true Holiness; and therein he was made to differ from all sensuall Creatures; and as the pure Reason and Understanding did fill his inward man, he had true liberty in the same, and his Conscience was free as unto God; but the fall leading nature out of its course, the Earthly wisdom entred man, and man entred into it, and thereby lost his pure Reason and Understanding in which he was created, and became earthly, sensuall and devellish; in which nature mans Conscience is bound in Chains of darkness, and in the same nature he would binde the Concience of others unto his own perswasion; but in the beginning it was not so: And by these Reasons following it may appear, that Liberty of Concience in things partaining to God, is of absolute necessity to be granted.

1. It being generally confessed, that man is degenerated from God, and that there is to be a Restauration by Jesus Christ; then in what way soever Christ doth appear in man to restore him unto God, he is not to be limited, or his appearance quenched by any Law or Decree; though he may appeare contrary to mans expectation.

2. It being generally confessed, that Christ is a Saviour; then he is not to be limited, or his appearance quenched, in what way soever he doth appear in man to work his salvation.

3. It being generally confessed, that all men have sinned, and that by Christ alone they must be redeemed; then he is not to be limited, or his appearance quenched, in what way soever he doth appear in man to work Redemption out of sin.

4. It being generally confessed, that sin separates from God, and that by Christ alone reconciliation must be made; then he is not to be limited, or his appearence quenched, in what way

ſoever he dot h appear in man to reconcile him unto God.

5. It being generally confeſſed, that God is a ſpirit, and muſt be worſhiped in ſpirit; then the ſpirits manifeſtation is not to be limited or quenched, in what way ſoeever it is made manifeſt in man to lead him into the worſhip of God.

6. It being generally confeſſed, that the ſpirit of truth leads into all truth; then the Spirit is not to be limited or quenched in what way ſoever it is made manifeſt in man to lead him into all truth.

7. It being generally confeſſed, that all people ſhould live a peaceable life; then the Spirit is not to be limited or quenched, in what way ſoever it is made manifeſt in man to kill the luſt and ſtrife, and to lead him in the way of peace.

8. It being generally confeſſed, that one man ſhould do unto another as he would that another ſhould do unto him, then the Spirit is not to be limited or quenched, in what way ſoever it is made manifeſt in man to beget Love in his heart, and to lead him to do good unto all men.

9. It being generally confeſſed, that all men ſhould be ſubject unto Kings, and all in authority; then the Spirit is not to be limited or quenched, in what way ſoever it is made manifeſt in man, to crucifie his rebellious nature, and to ſubject every thought into the obedience of Chriſt, and ſo make him ſubject unto Kings, and all in authority.

10. It being generally confeſſed, that there is but one way and truth, then the Spirit is not to be limited or quenched, in what way ſoever it is made manifeſt in man to diſcover falſe wayes and errors, and to lead him from them, and ſo bring him into the one way and truth according to its own pleaſure.

Now the Quakers principle and practice anſwering theſe generall Reaſons, there is a neceſſity why their Liberty ſhould be granted in things pertaining to God.

1. Becauſe they have received Chriſt Jeſus in the appearance of his Light, and are followers of his Light in his own way, and by the Light they are reſtored into the pure Reaſon, Wiſdom and Underſtanding in which their Inward man ſtands innocently before God, and their outward man diſpoſed in

Righteouſneſs

Righteousnes, as in the beginning.

2. Because the Light of Christ in which he hath unto them appeared, and is their principle, is made unto them the power of God unto salvation.

3. Because the Light of Christ hath taken away their sin, and redeemed them from all iniquity, and hath made them a peculiar people unto God.

4. Because the Light of Christ hath broken down the partition wall of sin, and hath reconciled them unto God, and made their peace.

5. Because the Light of Christ hath given them the true knowledge of the one onely wise God, unto whom alone they bow, and him onely worship in the Light of the Spirit which they have received.

6. Because the Light of Christ hath manifested the truth in their hearts, and led them in the same by its own power.

7. Because the Light of Christ hath killed the lust and strife in them, and lead them to live a peaceable life in all Godliness and honesty.

8. Because the Light of Christ hath purged out deceit and hypocrisie, and begotten love in their hearts, that they cannot render Evil for Evil, but abide in the doctrine of Christ, and love their Enemies.

9. Because the Light of Christ hath crucified the rebellious nature in them, and made them subject to his own will, and thereby subjects them unto Kings, and all in authority, and they faithfully answer the Kings command, wherein they can keep their Consciences clear in the sight of God, and what for Conscience sake they cannot answer, they patiently suffer under, and so dare do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, and walk with a Conscience void of offence towards God and man.

10. Because the Light of Christ hath discovered unto them the many false wayes and errors, and the great danger in them, and hath led them into the one way and truth, in which they have true peace with God, and serve him in singleness of their hearts; and thus hath Christ done that for them which no o-

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other could do; by which they know that it is he; and they are witneſſes of his power and life, giving him the glory over all, who is worthy for ever.

Now as it is evident by theſe Reaſons, that the Quakers have received the holy and true principle of Light that comes from Chriſt Jeſus, and walk in the ſame, ſo they ought to have that Liberty granted them into which Chriſt hath reſtored them, they anſwering in principle and practiſe thoſe things which by others are in words confeſſed, who ſay, but do not perform, which ſhews that they are in the weakneſs of the fleſh, in which none can pleaſe God; but they that obey the Light and follow it, they do thoſe things that are well-pleaſing in his ſight, and in the Light they are accepted; and in this principle and practiſe the Quakers have fulneſs of joy and peace.

Now as concerning others, who are not like-minded at preſent, and yet in their Conſcience are tender towards God, and anſwers a Conſcience unto God, according to the perſwaſion that he hath wrought in them by his Spirit, that they may not be ſuppreſſed, becauſe there is not any thing which is begotten in tenderneſs towards God, that is to be cruſhed, bruiſed or quenched by force or violence of any Law; and whileſt people behave themſelves peaceably, the Liberty of their Conſcience in things pertaining to God, ought not to be denied them; and where it is ſo, they that have power, do not to others as they would be done by, and ſo manifeſt that they are void of natural affections. And theſe things I write, that not any thing of God, though never ſo low and weak in its riſing, may be cruſhed or quenched any way in its tender breathings; ſo will truth, peace and righteouſneſs flouriſh in the Earth in the ſame life, power and wiſdom, which was before tranſgreſſion and perſecution, and puts an end to it again.

A tender Meſſage of Love unto the King.

O King, my ſpeech is directed unto thee in all humbleneſs of mind, and from the tenderneſs of my heart I write the

the matter which is laid upon me from the Most High, let it therefore be received and entertained by thee as a matter of greatest weight and concernment unto thee; for it is that only by which thou must either stand or fall.

Be it therefore known unto thee, that the one blood of which God made all Nations, and in which is life, is the most Royal blood, and the most noble and renownable of all things, and by it alone all mankind have life, breath and being, amongst whom thou art one, O King; therefore thy Life not being in thy own hand, consider who hath prolonged thy dayes, and stretched out thy years, who hath helped thee in time of straits, tryals, distresses and afflictions, is it not God alone, who also can cut thy days short, and finish them in a moment? Let this consideration be with thee in thy private chamber, that thou mayest fear before the Most High, and apply thy heart unto wisdom, for by Wisdom Kings reign, and Thrones are established; and in Wisdoms path thou wilt find the footsteps of those poor despised people called *Quakers*, who have hearkened to Wisdoms voice, and walk with her in her own way; therefore entreat them well, for they are a people redeemed by the Lord, and he hath chosen them out of Nations, Kindreds, Tongues and People, and they are as dear unto him as the apple of his eye, for he is their God, and they are his people; and of their innocency and peaceableness thou hast had large experience, and hast not found them at any time to be rebellious, though they have and do suffer great afflictions under thy power; yet this is their comfort in all their afflictions, that they do not suffer as evil-doers, but as innocent from all just offences, whereby they can approve their hearts unto God, and to the glory of God they can enquire of all men if at any time they have wronged, or injured, or evil entreated any man since the precious truth hath entered into their hearts, and if herein none can justly accuse them, as certainly none can, then the Lord wil not hold them guiltless that do in any wise oppress them, for it is his cause they stand in, & the strength of men cannot overturn it. Oh take counsel at the Light of Christ with which thou art enlightened, and in the Light thou wilt feel the Life

of

of these poor despised people; and as thou com'st to feel their Life in the Light, then will thy love be towards them; but if thou hate the Light in thy own conscience, thou canst never know them as they are, and so instead of being a Nursing-Father to them, thou mayest add to their afflictions, as being ignorant of them; for none can know them, but in the Light of Christ, by which they are changed and renewed in the spirit of their minds, and translated into the heavenly life, which the earthly Wisdom cannot comprehend. Oh! let no counsel enter into thy heart, to cause thee to turn against this people; but pursue thy promises which thou hast made, and so often renewed, touching Liberty of Conscience; for the performance of those promises will be of greater strength and security unto thee, then all the strength that others can give thee to defend thee, who with reasons would or may overcome thee to make thy promises void, and thereby cause thee to add afflictions upon the innocent, who at this day bear the burden, though every way they seek thy good, and concerning whom I do believe that thou hast a perswasion in thy own heart touching their innocency; and if thou take heed unto that which doth at any time perswade thee that they are an innocent people, it will yet more perswade thee, and will work thy heart into love towards them, even as theirs is towards thee, to do thee good in any wise; and as they are a free-born people within thy dominion, and have an outward portion in the same, with wives, children and families, who are ready to do good in all places where they are setled, let it not enter into thy heart to spoile them, or banish them from their native beings and birthrights, and from husbands, wives, children and relations, who are not all like-minded in the Truth. Therefore, O King, have regard to this weighty matter, upon which thy own happiness so much dependeth; for if thou do wel, it may be well with thee; but if otherwise, the Lord God will be clear when he judges.

Nottingham County-Gaol the
2*d* day of the 2*d* mo. 1663.

I am a sincere lover of thy immortal soul, *W. S.*

THE END.